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ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of the experiences of American students from Goshen College (Indiana) who participated in an exchange program at Sichuan Teachers College in China. The locale of Sichuan College is described, and the philosophy of Goshen's Study-Service Trimester is outlined. Articles relate the students' perceptions of China, the attitudes of the Chinese exchange students toward their government and the United States, the lifestyle of Chinese students, and comparisons between American and Chinese students. (JD)

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The Goshen College-China Exchange: An Overview

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The Goshen College-China Exchange: An Overview

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Introduction

In the fall of 1979 Goshen College President J. Lawrence Burkholder made a written proposal to education officials in the People's Republic of China for an exchange program. A few months later, President Burkholder and his wife Harriet visited China, primarily Sichuan province, to discuss the proposal further and returned to Goshen College with a firm agreement.

In late August, 1980, 20 Goshen College students and their faculty leaders, Atlee and Winifred Nelson Beechy, traveled to China. The students' experiences at Sichuan Teachers College in Chengdu, the provincial capital city of approximately one million people, provide the basis for most of this overview. However, the exchange also brought eight teachers of English from colleges and universities in Sichuan province to Goshen College. In addition to improving their English language skills and increasing their understanding of American culture, they have enriched the campus and community with their participation in numerous activities.

J. Lawrence Burkholder

The program, while still experimental, has been continued in 1981 on an expanded basis. Nine American professors of English, all with cross-cultural teaching experience, and four student assistants will conduct an eight-week institute for 120 students at the Northeast Institute of Technology at Shenyang in Liaoning province. This program is sponsored cooperatively

by Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Pa. In the fall, another 21 Goshen College students and their faculty leaders will resume the exchange with Sichuan Teachers College, and Goshen College will host nine teachers of English from Sichuan.

Harriet Burkholder

This overview can capture only some of the highlights of the exchange. Our thanks go to J. Lawrence and Harriet Burkholder, whose leadership made the program possible, to those who participated in the exchange and freely shared their insights, to those who have supported the program financially, notably the Charles E. Merrill Trust, the Martin Foundation and the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and to the reporters, photographers and editors who have helped to interpret the program's meaning.

The Goshen College-Sichuan exchange has undergone evaluation at a number of levels. Students and faculty have reflected on the program continually. Those visiting the program during the fall of 1980 included Ambassador and Mrs. Leonard Woodcock, President and Mrs. J. Lawrence Burkholder and Mr. and Mrs. Lee Martin. Arlin Hunsberger, director of international education, conducted a two-week evaluation on site in late November, 1980.

May, 1981

—Stuart W. Showalter
Director of Information Services
—Arlin Hunsberger
Director of International Education

Study And Service In China

By Atlee and Winifred Beechy

"The body travels more easily than the mind and until we have limbered up our imaginations, we continue to think as though we had stayed home," John Erskine once said. "We have not really budged a step until we take up residency in someone else's point of view." In one sense this is what liberal education and the struggle for international understanding and peace is all about. The Goshen College Study-Service Trimester in China was an effort to take up "residency in someone else's point of view."

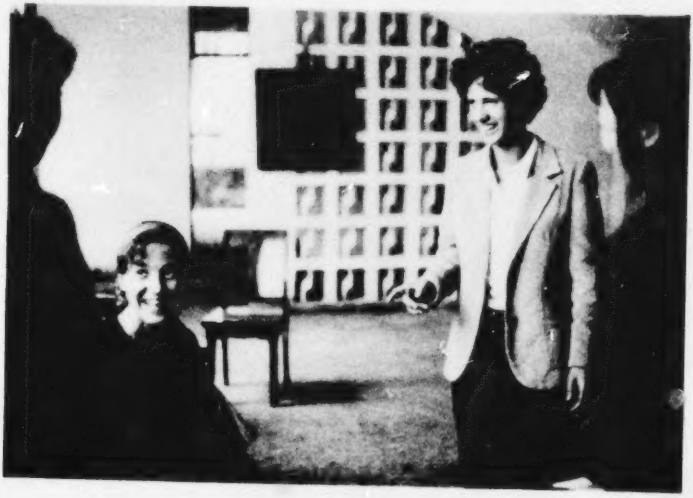
What was the emotional climate as our group began the China experience?

An Aug. 26, 1980, journal entry, written in Tokyo the evening before our flight to Peking, reads, "I wonder what Cheryl, Bruce, Metz, Cal, Cecilia, Julie and the other 14 students are thinking this evening. It seems unreal—boggles the mind. We are about to cross a curtain into a room we know little about. The past is prologue. The now is here. We look to tomorrow and the days that follow with a mixture of thoughts and feelings, eagerness and uncertainty, awe and wonderment, anxiety and hope, gratefulness and joy."

A few days later there was excitement mixed with anxiety aboard the train from Peking as it neared Chengdu on the night of Sept. 2, 1980. Twenty Goshen College students and two faculty members were about to venture into a trimester experiment in friendship and educational exchange with a Chinese college. The 36-hour train ride through the scenic mountainside cornfields of North China into the rich Sichuan Valley was the last leg of our journey halfway around the world. We were tired and a little apprehensive, yet hopeful and eager to learn. What would be our welcome by these Oriental people sometimes described by Westerners as "inscrutable?" What would the next four months bring?

Our fear of the many unknowns was somewhat allayed by the friendly reception at the railroad station from representatives of the Bureau of Higher Education and Sichuan Teachers College, by the large welcoming banner

Sichuan Teachers College constructed a dormitory for the Goshen College students, who affectionately referred to it as "the Panda Palace." Janet Kraybill and Korla Miller (below) share a laugh with Chinese friends.



Co-director Atlee Beechy and Mr. Wang, a guide and translator from the Sichuan Bureau of Higher Education, exclaim over a sight during a visit to the Forbidden City outside Peking.

which greeted us on the college campus, by the hot tea and snacks in the dining room of the new Residence Hall for Foreign Students, and finally by the comfortable rooms prepared for us.

Our visit was made possible by an agreement between the Sichuan Bureau of Higher Education and Goshen College. Sichuan Teachers College was designated as our host institution. Sichuan province, the rice basket of China, is located in West Central China. Sichuan, with a population of 100 million people, has a long and rich history. Chengdu is the province's 2,000-year-old capital. Kings and emperors rose and fell; craftsmen, artists and poets have lived in the "brocade city." Before the 1949 revolution, considerable missionary and church activity took place in Sichuan, including the establishment in Chengdu of West China Christian University, which is known as Chendu Medical College today.

Goshen College emphasizes international education and has had a requirement in this area for all of its graduates since 1969. About 90 percent of the graduates fulfill the requirement by participating in an overseas study-service trimester, commonly called SST. The SST experience offers students the opportunity to learn about the goals, achievements and problems of another culture, to see their own culture in a new perspective, to grow in transcultural understandings and to interpret these new understandings to the Goshen College campus and to the larger community. The program is one expression of the college motto, "Culture for Service," and helps to achieve a central objective of the college, namely the promotion of international education and world peace and the preparation of persons for active service in the world.

As part of the China-Goshen exchange program, eight teachers of English from Sichuan Province studied at Goshen College for nine months, September 1980-May 1981. Two of the teachers are from Sichuan Teachers College, and the remaining six are from other institutions of higher education in the province. The Chinese took a course specifically designed to help them improve their understanding of English and their teaching of English skills. In addition, they chose a number of electives from English department offerings. They opened windows to Chinese life and culture as they related to the campus and to the larger community. They were diligent in their studies and made a significant contribution to the building of friendship between the people of China and America. This aspect of the exchange is very important. The preliminary evidence suggests the exchange has worked well.

China is important for Asia and for what happens in the larger world. Nations, like individuals and groups, behave in part by the perceptions they have of themselves, their role in the world, the role they see for other nations and the role which nations permit each other to play. These relationships are influenced by perceived threats and narrow interests, often resulting in limited or distorted perceptions of each other. The past 30 years illustrate how these perceptions and misunderstandings have influenced the images that the United States and China have had of each other. The labels of friends and enemies have shifted.

The ignorance and fear which Americans have had of China is no doubt matched by the ignorance and fear the Chinese have had of America these past years. Our views have been

shaped considerably by false perceptions and distortions. Both Chinese and Americans have seen each other through a screen of cultural, political and historic biases. Fears have thrived on a climate of distrust, on suspicions of a distant people with whom there is little contact. Our goals for the trimester of study and service in China were to learn to know the Chinese people, to correct in a small way the distortions and to begin to bridge the distance that had separated us.

During our short but concentrated stay we lived, studied, played, shared and, above all, learned from Chinese students and faculty. We listened to more than 60 hours of lectures by experts in such fields as Chinese history and culture, economics and politics, education, literature, psychology, music and art. We were taken on more than 20 field trips to visit such places as museums, historic and scenic sites, handicraft workshops, factories, communes, musical performances, hospitals, educational institutions, Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, a Christian church, shopping areas, sports events and a trip to scenic Mount Emei over national holidays.

The 10-week field assignment was in the English Language Department of Sichuan Teachers College. Goshen students, in pairs of two, spent three hours a day in formal and informal classroom activities with Chinese students. These classroom activities and associations provided unusual opportunities for interchange at more than a superficial level, for the development of friendships, for the exploration of differences and commonalities and for providing a needed and appreciated educational service. For the American students the experience opened a window to the thinking, feelings and hopes of Chinese students, and it also opened a window for the Chinese students to American student patterns.

What does the total experience mean? How has it affected our mutual acceptance and respect for each other in spite of very significant differences in social, economic and political systems? One hundred Chinese students and faculty came 10 kilometers to the railroad station to bid us farewell late in the evening of Dec. 13. It was a moment of great emotional intensity. The tears flowed freely, both Chinese and American. The separation, though sad and difficult, was also beautiful. It was beautiful because the separation clearly demonstrated that significant friendships had developed. The development of these intense relationships took an interesting pattern. They

moved from an initial climate of uneasiness and curiosity to growing interest in each other, to the discovery of common human elements, to mutual respect for the differences and finally to deep affection.

We used a variety of procedures in evaluating the Goshen College student teachers. We discussed the experiences in weekly seminars. We interviewed small groups of Chinese students from each of the 11 English classes in which our students worked. We tabulated evaluation forms filled out by the 250 Chinese students enrolled. We visited the classrooms. The dean of the English Language Department prepared a written evaluation. The regular Chinese teachers evaluated the work of the American students, and the Goshen College students completed self-evaluation forms.

In response to an open-ended question, "What were the most important things you learned from your American student teachers?" used in the interviews and the written evaluation of Chinese students, the replies centered in three areas. The Chinese students learned about the English language--pronounciation, vocabulary, idioms—and developed additional skills in listening and writing. Secondly, they learned facts and information about America and the values and patterns of Americans. Thirdly, the Chinese students learned from the personal characteristics modeled by our students—caring, modesty, kindness, patience, friendliness, acceptance, conscientiousness, openness and liveliness. There were many discussions about values, philosophy of life, religion and science and the similarities and the differences between the two countries.

What did the American students learn? They placed high on their list what they learned about (1) the experiences, problems, values, hopes and culture of the Chinese; (2) the content and methods of teaching; (3) themselves—their abilities, limitations, patience and self-confidence. What did the American students think they contributed? They listed sincere friendship, assistance in English language usage and a better understanding of America and Americans.

There are risks in such an exchange of "residency" for the Chinese as well as for Americans. But it is only in such an exchange of ideas and experiences that we can move toward more accurate perceptions of each other and discover our common humanity. We obviously are still too close to assess the longer range impact on ourselves and on the Chinese. Goshen students rated it at this time as one of the most significant learning experiences of their lives. The Chinese students involved seemed to respond with equal enthusiasm.

After a mere 4½ months in China, we are very reluctant to list impressions about our experience. Who can begin to know this vast, diverse and complex country and culture? A lifetime would be necessary to begin that process. Who can comprehend the changes taking place in the new China and the changes in the responses of the countries of the world to China? There is a danger of oversimplifying China's complexity and Sino-American relationships. Orville Schell discusses this in his thoughtful essay entitled "Our Mistakes About China" (*Newsweek*, Feb. 16, 1981). It is reminiscent of the story of the blindmen and the elephant. Each person touched a different part—the ear, the trunk, the leg—and each generalized about the elephant on the basis of his experience. So it is with caution that we list the following impressions.

1. We were impressed with the sheer numbers of people living in China. The Chinese, approximately one-fourth of the world's population, live on one-fourteenth of the world's land area. What these one billion people think and do, how they see their role in the world and how the rest of the world responds to them will affect the building of world peace.

2. We were impressed by China's cultural self-consciousness, its ancient highly developed civilization, its rich and varied storehouse of literature, art and music, its cohesive sense of identity through the centuries.

3. We were impressed with the spirit of change and hope centered in the goals of the four modernizations—agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defense. The Chinese talk about themselves as being a developing people, behind technologically at the present moment in history and in a hurry to catch up. Modernization promises hope. The Chinese have not only "stood up" (Mao's classic words at the birth of the People's Republic in 1949), but they are running! Achievements in health, agriculture, education and industry, particularly since the cultural revolution, are significant. New incentives and greater flexibility in industrial and commune management have increased production and improved worker morale. The interesting phrases from the constitution, "He who does not work, neither shall he eat" and "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work," projects this emphasis.

Valerie Gross and a student at Sichuan Teachers College help each other with language lessons.

4. We were impressed with the friendliness of the Chinese people. This came to us at every turn and on every level. The Chinese told us again and again that it is their duty and privilege to serve us. We felt their genuine interest in and concern for us which, from our perspective, sometimes seemed overly protective.

5. We were impressed with the openness to speak of failures and mistakes of the past, of the current needs and problems. They released statistics describing these. One official said, "We have no starving people but we still have many who have inadequate diets." There is open talk of a growing number of unemployed young persons "waiting to be employed." There is

Winifred Beechy and Sharon Peachey pose during a visit to the Great Wall of China.

readiness to acknowledge and respect important differences between China and the United States and also to affirm our common needs and interests and to pursue new patterns of cooperation.

6. We were impressed with the pervasive destructiveness of the 10-year (1966-1976) Cultural Revolution for all aspects of Chinese life and the deep scars it has left on intellectuals, professionals, educators, persons with previous Western ties and religious leaders, including Christians. The suffering was widespread and reached into most homes in one form or another. At the recent trial, it was reported that 34,000 deaths resulted from the cultural revolution and that more than 700,000 had been unjustly persecuted, a minimal estimate. The "Gang of Four" receives the primary blame for this great tragedy, but the base of blame is spreading, including Mao and certain other leaders. There are Chinese who feel that the "Gang of Four" serve as a scapegoat for the failures of the past. Currently there is much discussion of the Cultural Revolution, with an emphasis on preventing its happening again.

7. We were impressed by the continuing emphasis on "service to the people," on mutual assistance, on maintaining a strong moral and social fabric in family and community life. There are Chinese who are concerned about possible erosion in some of these values. The economic range between rich and poor has been significantly reduced in China and is much narrower than here in the West. This does not mean, however, that China is a classless society.

8. We were impressed by the strong interest in educational and other exchanges. This is due in part to their seeing exchanges as a way to achieve the four modernizations. The teaching of English and certain other technical areas are important to the Chinese at this time. These exchanges have to be free from Western paternalism or arrogance.

9. We were impressed by the more tolerant and favorable attitude toward religious practices and beliefs as reflected in the opening of temples, mosques and churches to public worship. The three formal religions are far from dead, but to say they are flourishing would be a distortion. Christian faith, however, is very much alive in the formal, visible church and in the house churches. An ecumenical Protestant church in

Chengdu opened in March, 1980, and by fall it had an attendance of around 160 and was growing. The members are hopeful as they live their faith in this situation. We attended midnight mass on Christmas Eve in Shanghai and joined the 5,000 worshippers in an impressive service. When we attended the former Moore Memorial Church in Shanghai, we felt there, too, the liveliness of the faith. The Nanking Seminary is scheduled to open this year. Bibles, using the earlier translation, have been reprinted, and a new translation is in process. In this area, as in all areas, the day of outside intrusion and imperialism is past. The leaders of the three major religions make clear today that they intend to make their religions Chinese rather than an adaptation of foreign religions.

Our experience was enriching. We found a common humanity in our relationships with the Chinese people. Their hopes for themselves and their families and communities have many similarities to our own. Significant achievements have been made, but serious problems are still to be solved. Our discovery of our commonalities also revealed differences in philosophical commitments and directions.

Ross Terrill, China scholar, has said, "It is respect for China that makes it also necessary to raise questions about values." He added, "That is why a visit to China is a spiritual struggle, and to neglect questions would not be to respect China but to demean her." The following questions have been raised by the Chinese and by Terrill, and some have come out of our own experiences:

1. Can China-U.S. relationships continue on the normalization course without being sidetracked by narrow political or economic interests?

2. Can countries with substantial differing political, economic and social ideologies build a base of mutual respect and a common concern for world peace strong enough to transcend the differences and promote cooperation? Such a relationship, as American Ambassador Leonard Woodcock has so clearly stated, must be based on something beyond purely economic motivations or simply having a common enemy.

3. Will China be able to make sufficient progress toward modernization to secure the continuing support of its people? Can this be done without some breakdown of desirable

Chinese values and the accumulation of social ills which so often accompany modernization?

4. Can the impact of the C ıltural Revolution be reduced or eliminated and can such a devastating detour be prevented in the future?

5. Will the current changes in policies and political outlook continue and be consolidated, or will there be a backlash internally or one caused by a changing U.S. policy?

6. What influence will the new China leadership, that is, the leadership which did not participate in the revolution personally, have on the future? What is replacing Mao's earlier magnetic power to unify Chinese society? How will the fact that China's population is comparatively young, an estimated 450 milllion under 18 years of age, influence the future? How serious is the much discussed "crisis of belief" in China?

7. Over a period of time, what will be the psychological impact of the Chinese pattern of group social interaction, control and social pressures on personality?

8. How can the threat level—mutual China-Russia fear and the U.S.-U.S.S.R. fear syndrome—be reduced? How do we keep from deliberately or accidentally stumbling into the ultimate madness of nuclear war?

9. What roles do education, Chinese and American, and educational exchanges play in building a more peaceful world?

10. What should be the response of the wo. 'd's Christians, one-fourth of the world's population, to the Chinese, another one-fourth of the world's population? What should Christians' response be to the Christians in China, an estimated one million Protestants and two to three million Catholics?

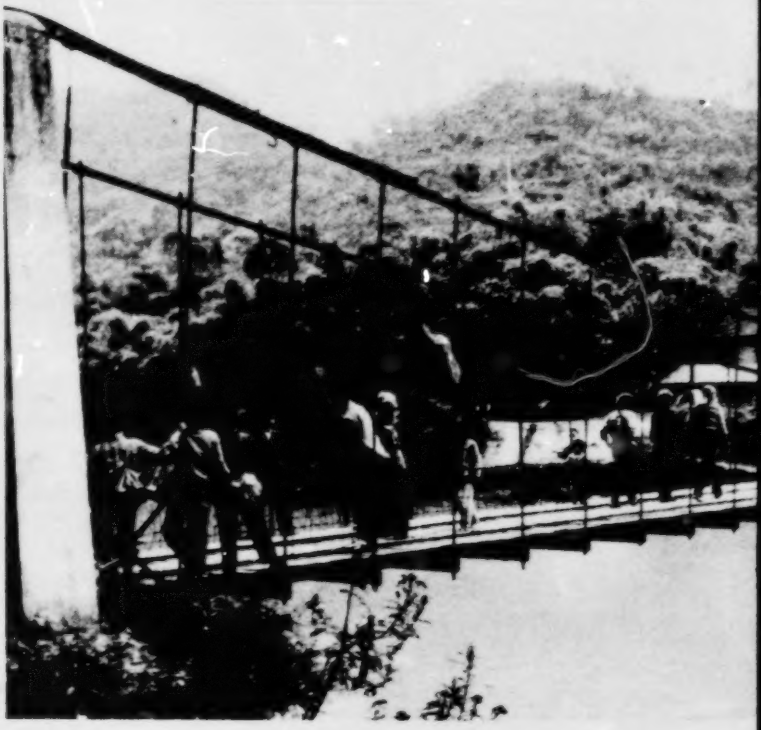
Only time and developments within China and responses of the rest of the world to China will provide answers to these questions. The U.S. response will be particularly important in these next years. The peace of the world and our own self-interest may well be involved.

The unfulfilled hope for our world was articulated in striking words by a great Chinese poet more than 1,200 years

ago. The poet, Tu Fu, speaking out of the dislocation and suffering of that warring period, wrote the poem entitled "On Washing Weapons":

While all scholars will write in praise of PEACE and
WISE RULE. . . . I dream that there
Might come some great man, who
Would bring down the River of Heaven
Cleaning all the WEAPONS of BLOOD,
So that they could be stored away
FOREVER. NEVER TO BE USED AGAIN!

We believe the Goshen-China exchange is one small effort of "taking up residency in someone else's point of view" and is one step toward the renewal of ties between the peoples of the



two countries as predicted by the late Premier Chou Enlai. In a 1956 speech to the National People's Congress he said, "China proceeds from the desire to co-exist peacefully with all countries, including the United States. . . . Furthermore, we are deeply convinced that the day will come when the Chinese and the American peoples, because of their traditional friendships, will resume their ties through their respective governments." That time is here.

Atlee Beechy is professor of psychology and peace studies at Goshen College. Winifred Beechy is coordinator of peace and social concerns with the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries. They served as co-directors of the study-service trimester in the People's Republic of China in the fall of 1980.

Bruce Newswanger conducts an English class at Sichuan Teachers College. Cynthia Holdeman (below) makes a purchase at a Chengdu store.

Calvin Esh gets a haircut. Julie Froese and the American team play coed basketball against a Chinese team.

A First For America

Good news came out of Goshen College last week, some of it with worldwide interest.

President J. Lawrence Burkholder finalized an agreement setting up the first undergraduate exchange program between an American college and the People's Republic of China. And Dr. Burkholder announced the receipt of a $100,000 gift from the Martin Foundation of Elkhart to help complete the financing of the Goshen College Umble Center.

This is good news for the entire Goshen community, not just for Goshen College.

The announcement that Goshen College will send 20 students to China for about four months of study received national attention. The students will study and work as assistants to Chinese teachers of English from late August through December of this year. In exchange, eight Chinese teachers of English will spend the 1980-81 academic year on the GC campus.

It will be interesting to have eight Chinese teachers living in our community. They will participate in extra curricular activities and take side trips to major cities in the U.S. But our community will have the major impact on these teachers who will return to their homeland and probably be talking to their students about Goshen in 'far away' America for many years. We think they'll like the people of our community and the Land of Goshen.

Goshen residents should make an effort to include our Chinese visitors in special activities and give them a good idea of what life is all about in our free society.

The reaction of the 20 GC students who will spend about four months in China also will be interesting. These students will get more than a tourist's view of China and they should receive good insight on the lifestyle of the Chinese people.

Arranging this exchange was not easy. President and Mrs. Burkholder have been working on the arrangements for more than two years and have taken two trips to China. The agreement is an indication that the Chinese respect Dr.

Burkholder and Goshen College. Completing this agreement, the first for any college in the United States, is a real tribute to Dr. Burkholder and to our own Goshen College.

The $100,000 gift from the Martin Foundation of Elkhart is another indication of support and confidence in GC. Raising $1,665,000 for construction and $400,000 for an endowment to provide upkeep for the Umble Center was no easy task either. The Center is another real asset to the college and to the entire community.

The Center is a quality fine arts center and can't be matched by many colleges the size of GC. The entire community will benefit from the center and many fine cultural events already have been scheduled there, with the community invited to attend. Many of these events are held with no admission charge.

Goshen College is a church-supported institution with a pacifist philosophy that may not be in tune with the thinking of some residents of our community. But Goshen College is an important asset to this community and is a fine example of the importance of freedom in the United States. All of us are free to believe as we choose and to support our own special interests. Goshen College provides a solid education to all types of young people who make a contribution to our community while they are here and certainly in the communities in which they locate to earn a livelihood.

The recent accomplishments of the GC administration are good examples of the quality of our own institution of higher learning.

This editorial is reprinted from The Goshen News *with permission. It was originally published May 6, 1980.*

Making Friends Of Chinese Important To GC Students

By Bill Gisel

The establishment of close, intimate friendships with Chinese students is the most important aspect of a 17-week stay in the People's Republic of China, according to three Goshen College students recently returned from that country.

Ten of 20 GC students who participated in the first undergraduate exchange program between an American college and a Chinese university appeared at a press interview Thursday morning at Umble Center. Also present were three of eight Chinese teachers who are spending a year at Goshen College.

Dwight Nissley, South Bend; Julie Froese, LaJunta, Colo., and Janet Kraybill, Springs, Pa., agreed on the importance of the individual friendships that were established.

The students lived in a specially constructed dormitory at Sichuan Teachers College in Chengdu and worked in pairs teaching English to language students. Each GC student worked for three hours a day in intensive reading with students. When not in class, the GC personnel found themselves constantly surrounded by Chinese eager to learn more about the Americans.

"We all have at least 10 friends, five close friends and at least two intimate friends," said Miss Froese. Each student expects to maintain contact with the intimate friends and hopes to one day re-establish friendships personally.

Several of the exchange students are making plans for careers that will keep them involved in China, but those students were not present for the interview session.

Nissley said most Chinese students with whom the GC students worked had at least five years of English study. Many Chinese learn English from listening to Voice of America radio broadcasts before taking any formal instruction in the language, he said.

The GC students conducted their own church services, but did visit some Chinese churches, now reopening after the cultural revolution. Miss Froese said those churches were more for show than functional use, and serious worship is conducted in house churches, which she said are semi-secret. Nissley noted, however, that religious freedom is guaranteed under the Chinese constitution.

Nissley said Christianity helped to foster the "foreign devil" concept the Chinese long held, prior to the opening of relations between the U.S. and China.

"The churches looked the other way," Nissley explained, when foreign governments colonialized China and established their ways there.

Some of the students said Thursday they had a hard time readjusting to the U.S. culture when they returned from China.

"It was strange to look around and see people all dressed up and made up," Miss Froese said. In China, all the people dress alike, and they judge each other on the basis of personality rather than on looks, Nissley said.

The students said the political emphasis Westerners associate with a communist system is being replaced with an emphasis on that country's economy. That, they say, explains the intense interest in the English language and a thirst for technical knowledge.

Miss Kraybill said she feels there is a real hazard in that intense interest, however, because the Chinese are then in danger of losing their own values to the quest for modernization.

Bill Gisel is a staff writer for The Elkhart Truth, *from which this article is reprinted by permission. It was orginally published Jan 23, 1981.*

Chinese Following 'Gang' Trials From Indiana College

By Sherman Goldenberg

A tiny enclave of mainland Chinese English teachers, here as part of the first Sino-American undergraduate exchange program, has been scouring newspapers and TV broadcasts for news of the epic Gang of Four trials.

But the eight Chinese nationals here at Goshen College, a 1,100-student Mennonite institution, say they can't find enough to read about the lurid confessions of Mao Tse-Tung's widow and others accused of subverting China's Communist regime during the Cultural Revolution.

They say it's not the threat of legal punishment that makes for good reading. Rather, they contend, it is important for all Chinese people to understand what went wrong during the Cultural Revolution to ensure that such a "disaster" never happens again.

"To let such crimes, such serious disasters (go) untold would undermine the feelings of the Chinese people," said Tian Shouming, 42, a teacher at the Sichuan Provincial Teachers College in Chengdu, a rich agricultural area of southwestern China. "So, we must criticize their crimes."

Despite the shortage of international news, the eight Chinese exchange students appeared to be faring well last week when interviewed by *The Journal-Gazette*. The professors, selected by the Chinese Bureau of Higher Education, arrived in the United States on Sept. 5 to study American teaching methods and promote goodwill.

Their counterparts in China, 20 Goshen College students, have spent the same three months studying Chinese culture and assisting English teachers at the Sichuan college. The Americans are due home later this month, and the Chinese will remain in Goshen through the school year.

The exchange program was negotiated by Goshen College President J. Lawrence Burkholder, a relief worker in China from 1944 until his evacuation from Shanghai in 1948.

The Lilly Endowment, Inc., of Indianapolis, and other private foundations are funding the program, one of several new links forged between the United States and China in recent years.

The Chinese emerged from their Cultural Revolution four years ago—after decades of isolation—eager to modernize and rebuild their country. Since all colleges were closed from 1966-76, an enormous demand for higher education now exists.

The Chinese have actually turned to two Hoosier schools for help; Indiana University is to begin exchanging researchers and students with Shandong University next year.

At Goshen, meanwhile, the Chinese have had an active fall, trying to keep up with classes, presenting talks to service clubs and schools, and acclimating themselves to this country. In an interview conducted in a student lounge, they discussed several topics.

•**Culture shock:** The Chinese say they were not as surprised at what they found here as many Americans might suspect. As English teachers, they had all read widely and listened to enough overseas radio to prepare for the transition from Asia to North America.

By the same token, they find many Americans to be ignorant of mainland Chinese realities.

"Yes," said 32-year-old Wen Houyi, "I find some people still think China is very backward because (of something) they saw in the 1940s. And they thought maybe we had never seen a refrigerator or a gas stove. But we have."

•**American education:** What impresses 48-year-old Zeng Zhengsen the most here is the access most citizens have to a higher education. With the backlog of applicants in China today, only those scoring in the upper two or three percentiles on entrance exams are eligible for college.

•**China after the trial:** The English teachers predict the Chinese people will accept more Western influences in coming years, but will preserve their ancient culture and traditions in the process. China must now keep the good aspects and discard the bad, they say, and the basic principles of Chinese Communism will undoubtedly be retained.

"Since we have a very long history of rich culture," Tian said, "we must keep the culture and good traditions of ours and not copy from the West."

•**The weather:** It's been warmer here than these Chinese, hailing from a semi-tropical province, expected.

•**McDonald's hamburgers:** They haven't tried one yet.

•**Music:** They prefer classical or jazz to disco or rock 'n' roll. And they think our dancing styles look more like physical exercises than art forms.

"We don't like so much noise in music," Tian said.

•**The Amish:** Having visited an Amish household over Thanksgiving in Lancaster, Pa., the Chinese academicians were amazed that such a subculture could exist in such an advanced, industrialized country. It is a lifestyle they said they would have no part of.

•**Goshen:** The exchange students think this Elkhart County community is a "wonderful" place full of ordinary people who rarely dwell on the ideological differences betrween Peking and Washington, D.C.

"It's really a surprise," said Wen, a mother of one. "We find the people are really so friendly to us."

"I find a common desire to cherish the friendship between our two countries after a separation of 30 years," added Zeng.

Sherman Goldenberg is a staff writer for the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette, *from which this article is reprinted by permission. It was originally published Dec. 15, 1980.*

American And Chinese College Students: A Comparison Of Moods

By Mark F. Liechty

One of the most striking trends in modern China is the desire for rapid advancement. In everything from the enormous amount of construction to the impressive industrial growth of the past few years and the intense interest in Western thought and technology, China displays its desire for a better future.

This spirit of progress is especially strong in intellectuals and on college campuses where it produces a feeling of optimism. An already overcrowded job market also produces a group of highly motivated and devoted students. Because of unique political and social realities, Chinese college students and intellectuals differ from their American counterparts in a number of significant ways.

The optimism and faith in the future that the Chinese students hold is one of these differences. In most cases, American young people are uncertain, if not pessimistic, about their country's future. Dwindling oil reserves threaten the American way of life and create tensions worldwide. Our army, of questionable competence, controls the most destructive force in the world and appears to be more and more ready to use it. These problems, combined with the fear that we may have gone too far to turn back, create what appears to be a dismal future.

China, on the other hand, is riding a wave of optimism which began with the "smashing" of the "Gang of Four." This marked the end of the 10-year Cultural Revolution during which millions of Chinese suffered atrocities that the West is only begining to comprehend. The ultra-leftist regime of the past decade has been replaced by a far more pragmatic group of leaders who put results before ideology. The annual People's Congress has begun to use some of its legislative powers instead of merely acting as a rubber stamp.

Even the Communist Party is down-playing the traditional Marxist doctrine of class struggle in favor of a propaganda line

that calls for individual and nationwide advancement through hard work. The result has been a desperately needed relaxation of political and social pressures that has already begun to pay off in increased agricultural and industrial output. Although the Chinese people are still restricted in many ways, their relative position has improved greatly and the national spirit reflects this change. These recent changes are especially appreciated by the students and intellectuals, the group that received the greatest amount of abuse during the Cultural Revolution.

This year's college seniors will be the first group of four-year graduates since the mid-sixties when almost all of China's colleges and universities were forced to a virtual standstill. For these people, the national feeling of optimism is revealed in a strong belief in the power of education. They believe that problems stemming from misunderstanding and ignorance, such as war, poverty, and oppression, in a properly educated society can be eliminated. Even though the experience of the West would tend to disprove this theory, it sets up a noble goal for the future leaders and eductors of China.

Mark F. Liechty from Goshen is a junior at Goshen College.

The Lifestyle Of Chinese Students

By Maribeth Nafziger

In my first month here in China, I've seen many different sides of the country—the crowds of people, new construction, bicycles, government control, the beauty of the land and the friendliness and kindness of the people. However, I've been most interested in the lifestyle of Chinese students.

Graduates from high school are either assigned to a job or given the opportunity to further their education. Those who are permitted to continue in school take examinations and are then placed at a college in a certain field of study. Although the students are permitted to indicate their preference of subject matter, the final decision is made by the government. Requirements and class schedule are strictly dictated and the student has few alternatives. Although this system seems harsh, the state pays for the total cost of tuition and expenses. Also, graduation and a job in the field of study are guaranteed. Very few graduates in the states have that kind of assurance.

Reactions to this system are varied. Some who are very dedicated to the Four Modernizations (the state goal of modernizing agriculture, industry, science and techology and national defense) feel they are doing their part and are content. Others are concerned that many useful minds are being wasted, i.e., there may be talented technical engineers among elementary school teachers and vice versa. I must agree with this point. The system may be inefficient in other ways also. A person who is happy with a job will work harder and better than someone who detests his work.

I can't help but compare the lifestyle of a student here to the lifestyle of an American student. All days begin at 6 a.m. with physical exercises and breakfast before the first class at 7:50. I often think of the American student who would do almost anything to prevent having a class at such an early hour. If such a class were necessary, he would no doubt rise no earlier than 7 a.m. for the occasion.

Here a common sight in the morning is the students strolling outside the classrooms, reading out loud from their textbooks. Students here usually study 25 or more hours per week, whereas those in the states only spend from 16 to 20 hours.

Besides these class hours, students spend the majority of their study time in the classroom.

As I found out, study time might as well be synonymous with free time. One Friday evening we went to a campus program welcoming the new students to the school. Curious as to what a Chinese does on a Friday night, we asked a student what he planned to do after the program. We weren't much surprised when he said he would probably go to his dormitory room (with his seven roommates) and study or read some poetry before turning in. It made us think of the pizza parlor, stereo parties and general dorm life back in the United States.

A college campus in China is not only a place of learning, but an entire community. The teachers and professors live with their families right next to the students. There is a kindergarten and primary school located on the grounds with a middle school just outside the school gate. Also, there are two factories on campus which help support the college. Workers for these factories and for the constant construction and reconstruction of buildings live nearby and are part of the school community. Peasants grow vegetables and other foodstuffs to contribute to the educational effort. Everyone has a niche, and most seem happy and content in their position. I really appreciate the atmosphere this type of living creates.

Perhaps the most impressive of practices here is the physical activity everyone takes part in. Early in the morning, the track is packed with joggers. During breaks between classes many students exercise to the taped music blaring from loudspeakers. Physical training is a required class for the first two years of study. The period from 4:30 to 6:00 every afternoon is designated as recreation time. During that interval the athletic field is packed with joggers, people playing basketball, soccer, volleyball, ping-pong, badminton and those working out on gymnastic equipment. It appears that everyone is in good physical condition.

I came to China with the attitude that we would be learning from the Chinese as well as teaching them, but I didn't realize how much we would be learning. I admire the Chinese simple lifestyle and the willingness to work hard for a common cause. We as Americans have great friends in the Chinese.

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